

HELPS FOR READING CHINESE GENEALOGIES

(Note: While this paper is intended to assist those without Chinese language skills to read Chinese genealogies, the suggestions included below are for those who have at least a basic skill to recognize Chinese characters and distinguish them one from another.)

It is said, the three pillars of Chinese history are the standard or dynastic histories, the local gazetteers, and genealogies. The Chinese historians give great weight to each of these genres. Among these three elements, genealogy has the longest history and is perhaps the most influential. Scholars have shown that genealogies are a valuable source for insight into Chinese history. Since most genealogies continue into the early or mid-twentieth century, a researcher who can connect into a lineage genealogy can often determine their pedigree quickly and accurately back into the 1600s and, typically, much further.

The history of written Chinese genealogy goes back to at least the 11th century B.C. Based on the content of the earliest written pedigrees, one can confidently conclude that they were based on pre-existing oral pedigrees. Most extant genealogies, however, were compiled during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) or later.

Terms for Chinese Genealogies

Chinese genealogies are commonly referred to as jiapu, zupu, or zongpu. In general, these terms can reflect levels of kinship structure, as show below in ascending order of scope. However, these kin groups do not always equate to the term used in the title. One must examine the contents to be sure.

家譜 (jiāpǔ) – family genealogy record

族譜 (zúpǔ) – local lineage genealogy record

宗譜 (zōngpǔ) – higher-order genealogy record

Other terms for Chinese genealogies include:

房譜 (fángpǔ)

譜錄 (pǔlù)

家記 (jiājì)

世譜 (shìpǔ)

統譜 (tǒngpǔ)

家志 (jiāzhì)

支譜 (zhīpǔ)

通譜 (tōngpǔ)

會譜 (huìpǔ)

分譜 (fēnpǔ)

譜牒 (pǔdié)

牒誌 (diézhì)

譜系 (pǔxì)

玉牒 (yudí)

譜誌 (pǔzhì)

譜傳 (pǔzhuàn)

家乘 (jiāshèng)

族誌 (zúzhì)

Reading Titles of Genealogies

1. By clan, lineage, or family name

Many titles of genealogies simply include the surname.

Example:

王氏家譜 (wáng shì jiā pǔ) - The Wang Clan Genealogy

王 (wáng) – the surname Wang

氏 (shì) – clan, lineage, or family

家譜 (jiāpǔ) – genealogy or family record

2. By branch, location, or ancestor

The Chinese have a segmentary lineage system. This means that it has many nested branches or segments that trace their roots back to an early common ancestor. Each segment or group of segments may compile its own genealogy, and finally there may be a genealogy that includes all of the segments.

Therefore, titles may include branch names, place names, or ancestor names that identify the segment or group.

A. Example by branch name:

太原堂溫氏族譜 (tài yuán táng wēn shì zú pǔ) – The Taiyuan Branch, Wen Clan Genealogy

太原堂 – The Taiyuan Branch

溫 (wēn) – the surname Wen

氏 (shì) – designates clan or surname

族譜 (zúpǔ) – genealogy

Terminology for lineage branch or segment:

堂號 (tánghào) – lineage branch or segment

派 (pài) – lineage branch or segment

B. Example by location:

福建寧德九都貴村王氏宗譜 (fú jiàn nìng dé jiǔ dū guì cūn wáng shì zōng pǔ) -- The Fujian (Province) Ningde (City) Jiu Du (Ninth District) Gui Cun (Village) Wang Clan Genealogy

福建 (fújiàn) – Fujian (Province)
寧德 (nìngdé) – Ningde (City)
九都 (jiǔdū) – Ninth District
貴村 (guìcūn) – Gui Village
王 (wáng) – the surname Wang
氏 (shì) – designates clan or surname
宗譜 (zōngpǔ) – genealogy

Terminology for locations:

里 (lǐ) – hamlet, neighborhood, village
村 (cūn) – village, hamlet
鄉 (xiāng) – village, subdistrict, rural
間 (lǔ) – village of 25 families
城 (chéng) - municipality
市 (shì) - city
埠 (bù) – city-port
區 (qū) – district
都 (dū) -- district
地 (dì) - region
府 (fǔ) - prefecture
縣 (xiàn) – county
省 (shěng) - province
國 (guó) - country

C. Example by ancestor name:

學登本祖家譜 (xué dēng běn zǔ jiā pǔ) – The Xuedeng Originating Ancestor Genealogy

學登 (xué dēng) – Lin Xuedeng, an ancestor of a branch of the Lin family that settled in the Xinhui area of Guangdong Province
本祖 (běn zǔ) – originating ancestor
家譜 (jiā pǔ) - genealogy

Terminology for ancestors:

祖 (zǔ) - ancestor

始 (shǐ) – the beginning

遷 (qiān) or 遷居 (qiān jū) – to move, change residence, migrate

受姓 (shòu xìng) – to receive a surname

There are three key ancestors in genealogies:

受姓始祖 (shòu xìng shǐ zǔ) - the ancestor who received the clan surname (usually during the Zhou dynasty, 1046-222 B.C.)

始祖 (shǐ zǔ) - the first ancestor (who founded the lineage, often during the Tang, A.D. 618-907 or Song, 960-1279, dynasties)

始遷祖 (shǐ qiān zǔ) - the first migrant ancestor (who moved to a new location, founding a new branch of the lineage.) A variant of this term is 遷居始祖 (qiān jū shǐ zǔ).

Reading Genealogy Narrative Sections

Genealogy collections generally include a brief history of the origin of the family and the dispersion pattern of some of the branches. Contents may also feature explanations of surname origin, biographies on progenitor ancestors, notations of outstanding ancestors, family rules and obligations regarding customs and rites, exhortations for righteous living, poems for generational names, and many other topics.

These sections are the most difficult for those having limited Chinese language capability. Most often, assistance will be required from one proficient not only in reading Chinese vernacular but classical Chinese texts as well. Nonetheless, for a novice Chinese reader a familiarity of the complexities of Chinese names in genealogical records could be useful in gleaning useful information from these sections.

Chinese name order

A complete Chinese name can consist of two or three characters. The first character is the family or clan name known as the surname name in English while the personal name may contain a middle and last character. Notice that the surname location is the reverse order to English practice, e.g. 毛澤東 (Máo Zédōng), where 毛 (Máo) was his surname and 澤東 (Zédōng) was his given name. Sometimes, a complete name can consist of only two characters, e.g. 陳豫 (Chén Yù) where the surname is 陳 (Chén) and the given name is 豫 (Yù). Single character surnames are the most common, like 楊 (Yáng) and 周 (Zhōu), but there are also a small number of two character surnames, like 歐陽 (Ōuyáng) and 司馬 (Sīmǎ).

Generation Names

After the family or clan name known as a surname in English comes the middle name or family hierarchy name, also called the Generation Name. Men belonging to the same generation within a clan will share a common name, which can be positioned either in the middle or at the end. This name serves as a classifier to the hierarchical ranking for the generations as specified in the clan's Generation Poem (字輩詞 – zì bèi cí), and is referred to as the Generation Name (輩字 – bèi zì).

Multiple/Alternate Names

A person may have more than one name, especially depending on life he or she is in. Genealogical records may use just one of these names but may also specify a number of names for an individual. Types of names include:

小名 (xiǎo míng) – birth/infant name, given at birth. Also referred to as 乳名 (rǔ míng) – milk name.

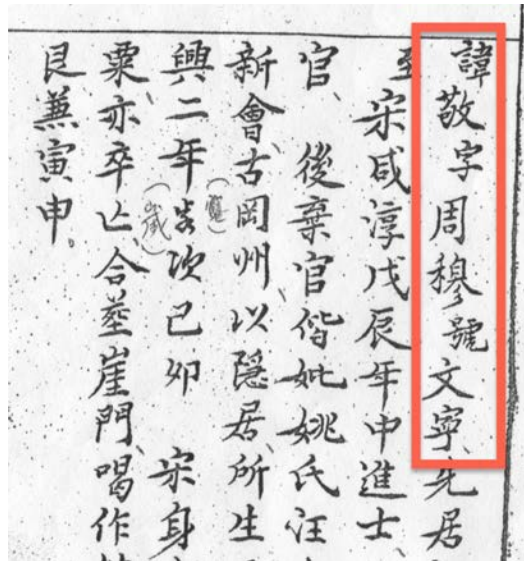
名 (míng) – official name, used during youth, given roughly at 3 months. Also referred to as 大名 (dà míng).

字 (zì) - school name, style name, or courtesy name, given at age 20 during a Coming of Age Ceremony (成年禮 – chéng nián lǐ). Also referred to as 表名 (biǎo míng).

號 (hào) – assumed name, literary name, or pseudonym, may be created by an individual himself or may be given to him by others, conferred when one becomes established in life. Can also refer to the 諡號 (shì hào) - posthumous name given to rulers, nobleman, or eminent officials, or the 廟號 (miào hào) - temple name, given posthumously for inclusion in the clan temple.

諱 (huì) – taboo name, given to a deceased emperor or head of family

Example:



This selection is taken from a 溫 (Wēn) clan genealogy. Note that in Chinese genealogies, the surname is not repeated in names throughout the record. In this narrative, it begins by referring to the progenitor by his taboo name, 諱 – 敬 (Jìng); his school name, 字 – 周穆 (Zhōumù); and his assumed name, 號 – 文寧 (Wéníng).

Reading Genealogy Pedigree Charts (世系圖 – shì xì tú) and Biographical Data Tables (世系表 – shì xì biǎo)

Chinese genealogies generally include:

- A list of male ancestors' names according to generation order
- The birth year, death year, or burial year of the ancestor, if known
- The maiden surname of the spouse, if known
- The number and names of the male descendants of each couple, if known

(Note: The pedigree information in Chinese genealogies is a patrilineal system, i.e., names of daughters are not included. When daughters marry, they are considered a part of their husband's family.)

Pedigree Charts (世系圖 – shì xì tú) Pedigree charts in Chinese genealogies typically begin with a primogenitor ancestor, a 始祖 (shǐ zǔ), in the Generation No. 1 position. Pedigree charts are generally arrayed to show clear descending relationships from father to sons and the birth order of male siblings. Wives, typically designated by surname only, are delineated. Chinese genealogies can be presented in various styles or formats, some with connecting lines, some showing generations within a pattern of tables from top-to-bottom, some from right-to-left. Some styles combine biographical data tables within the pedigree charts, some are strictly pedigree charts with data tables listed separately. Five commonly used pedigree chart styles are presented below.

Biographical Data Tables (世系表 – shì xì biǎo)

Biographical data tables list vital, detailed information. These tables typically include birth and death dates, burial dates and tomb locations for husbands, spouses, and sons. The biographical data tables may also include alternate names, scholarly titles earned via the examination system, titles of government positions held, military rank, and other achievements and honors. Depending on the pedigree chart format, names of sons can be listed in the data tables vice being displayed by connecting lines.

Five Examples of pedigree charts:

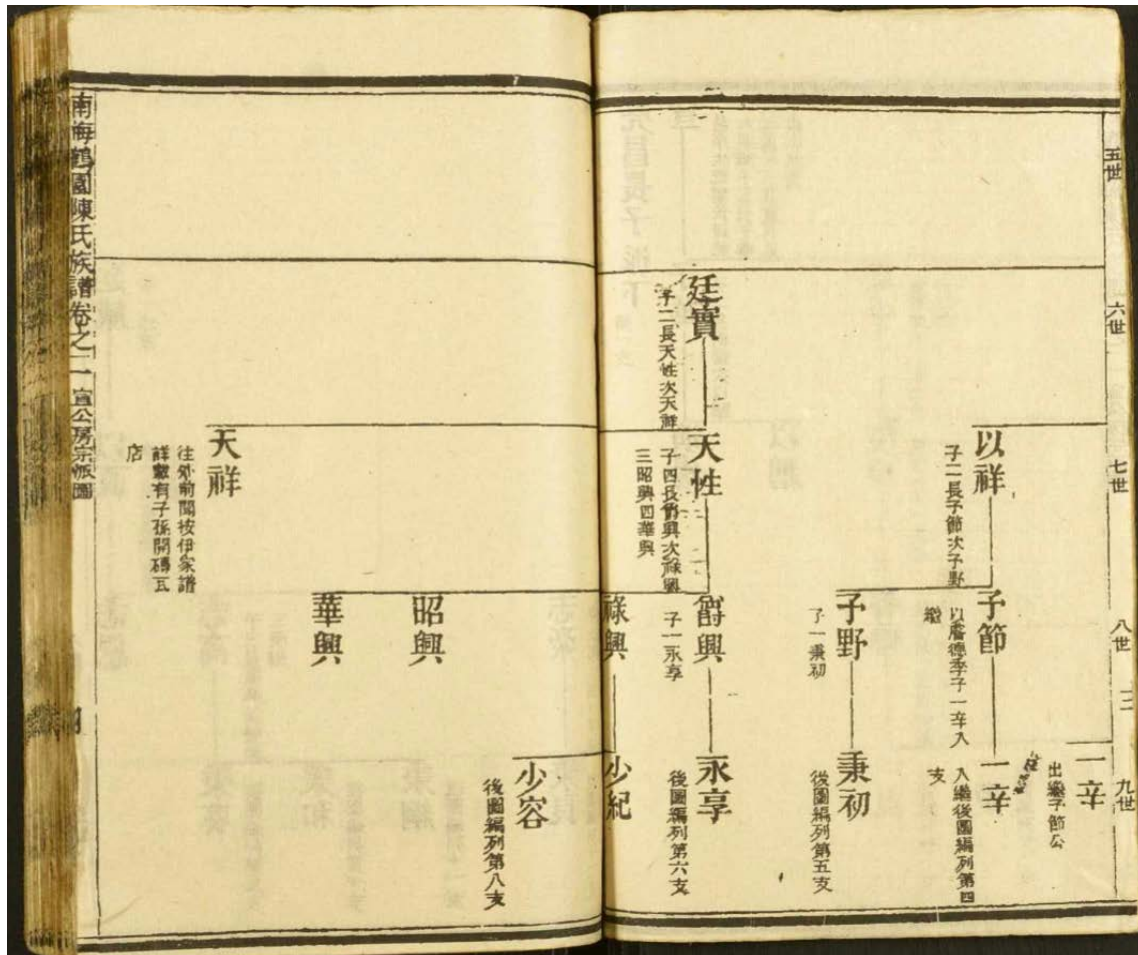
The Ou Style (歐式), also known as the Horizontal Style (橫行体)

Developed by Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修), Song dynasty scholar (1007-1072 AD). The pedigree chart shows five generations per page, top-to-bottom, with horizontal entries, right-to-left. The entries generally include biographical data, with names, alternate names, surname of spouse(s), dates of birth, dates of death, places of burial, official positions and honors.

必傑房系 接上龍有房系	四世	子長 思彬 妣丁氏 生子二 義權	子長 仲權	五世	子次 仲義	義權
六世	子次 映國	子道發	子承鳳	七世	子承鳳	義權
八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	九世	子承鳳	義權
十世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	十一世	子承鳳	義權
十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	十三世	子承鳳	義權
十四世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	十五世	子承鳳	義權
十六世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	十七世	子承鳳	義權
十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	十九世	子承鳳	義權
二十世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	二十一世	子承鳳	義權
二十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	二十三世	子承鳳	義權
二十四世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	二十五世	子承鳳	義權
二十六世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	二十七世	子承鳳	義權
二十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	二十九世	子承鳳	義權
三十世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	三十一世	子承鳳	義權
三十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	三十三世	子承鳳	義權
三十四世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	三十五世	子承鳳	義權
三十六世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	三十七世	子承鳳	義權
三十七世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	三十八世	子承鳳	義權
三十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	三十九世	子承鳳	義權
三十九世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十世	子承鳳	義權
四十世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十一世	子承鳳	義權
四十一世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十二世	子承鳳	義權
四十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十三世	子承鳳	義權
四十三世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十四世	子承鳳	義權
四十四世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十五世	子承鳳	義權
四十五世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十六世	子承鳳	義權
四十六世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十七世	子承鳳	義權
四十七世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十八世	子承鳳	義權
四十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	四十九世	子承鳳	義權
四十九世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	五十世	子承鳳	義權
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五十一世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	五十二世	子承鳳	義權
五十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	五十三世	子承鳳	義權
五十三世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	五十四世	子承鳳	義權
五十四世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	五十五世	子承鳳	義權
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五十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	五十九世	子承鳳	義權
五十九世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十世	子承鳳	義權
六十世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十一世	子承鳳	義權
六十一世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十二世	子承鳳	義權
六十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十三世	子承鳳	義權
六十三世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十四世	子承鳳	義權
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六十五世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十六世	子承鳳	義權
六十六世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十七世	子承鳳	義權
六十七世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十八世	子承鳳	義權
六十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	六十九世	子承鳳	義權
六十九世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十世	子承鳳	義權
七十世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十一世	子承鳳	義權
七十一世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十二世	子承鳳	義權
七十二世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十三世	子承鳳	義權
七十三世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十四世	子承鳳	義權
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七十五世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十六世	子承鳳	義權
七十六世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十七世	子承鳳	義權
七十七世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳	七十八世	子承鳳	義權
七十八世	子承鳳	子承鳳	子承鳳			

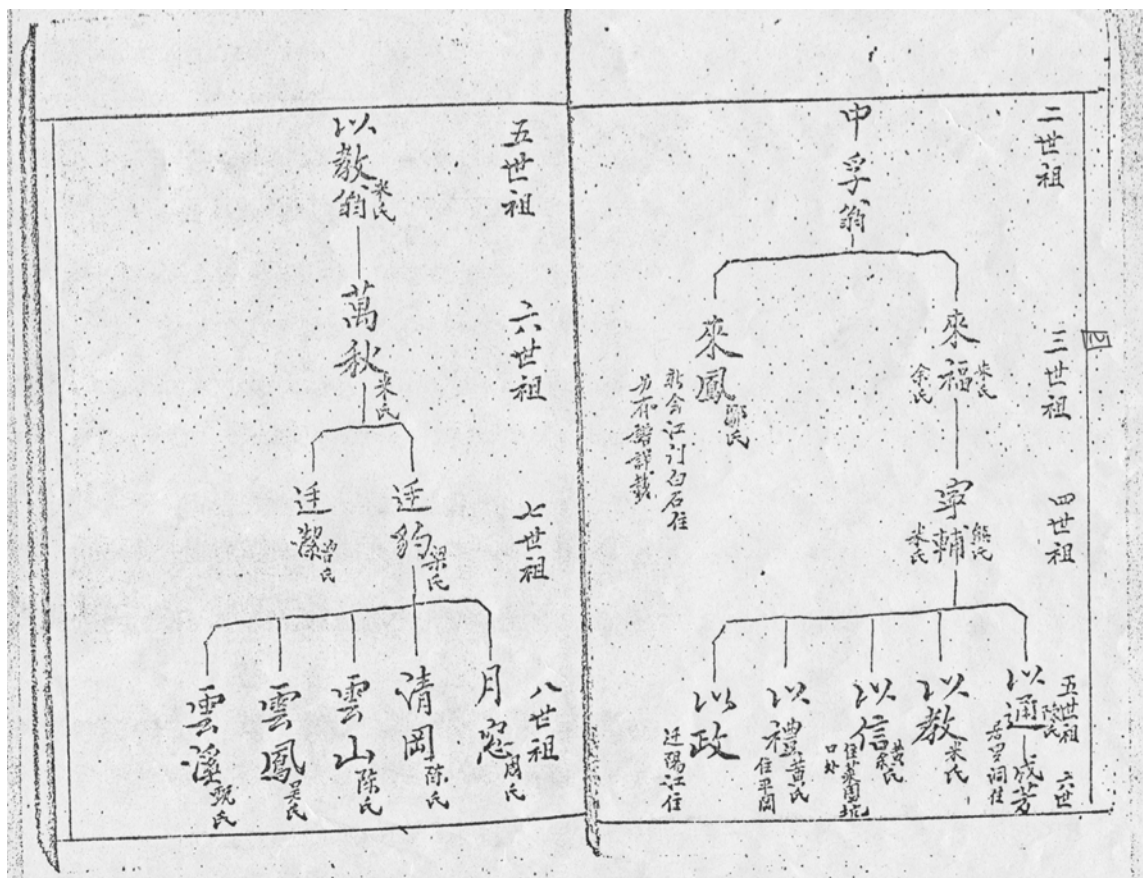
The Su Style (苏式), also known as the Hanging Pearl Style (垂珠体)

Developed by Su Xun (苏洵), Song dynasty scholar (1009-1066 AD). The pedigree charts display generations hang vertically, right-to-left with connecting lines. Biographical data is also included.

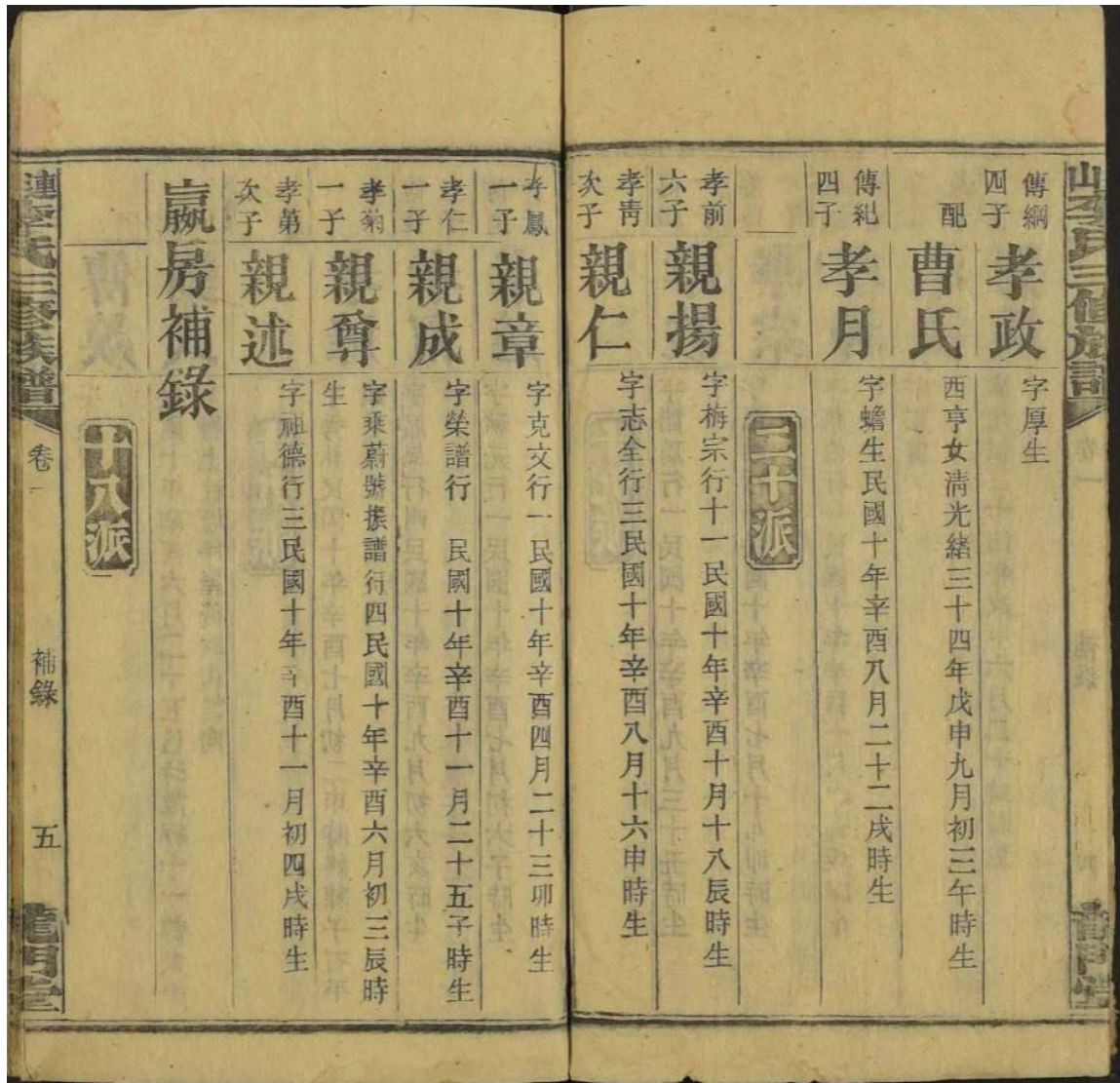


The Pagoda Style (宝塔式)

Displays pedigree chart from top-to-bottom with connecting lines. There is generally little or no biographical data.



The generations hang vertically, right-to-left. The text runs top-to-bottom. Biographical data tables are included.



The Document Style AKA Story Line Style (流水式)

The pedigree charts are presented in paragraph form, without connecting lines or table lines.

終於民國六年丁巳四月初四日早外時享壽八十三歲
葬於栢城大伯公山連義堂總坎下向之原

二十二世祖 譚錦添 字 緯昌 監名仕君 別字 煒文 二十
一世 繼綿公之長子也 公性好讀書 勤儉治家 教訓
小弟 配 象涌羅儀京公之女 氏生一女 名 柳想 女
生於道光庚寅年九月廿日寅時 生子一口 名 常科 生
於光緒甲午年九月初七日巳時 公時授國學生 生於
同治壬戌三月廿日寅 公運蹇 被人屈辱 遷居於
江陽塘坊 終於光緒廿四年七月初四日寅時 享年
三十七歲 葬於鸛地坑向之原 羅氏生於同治二
年癸亥三月二十五日亥時 終於宣統元年十月十二日
時 葬於柳西塘之前向之原

二十二世祖 譚洪添 字 奕昌 二十一世 繼綿公之次子也 公
配 中江盧迪昭之女 公生於同治三年甲子五月十
日巳時 生女一口 名 柳屏 生於光緒十二年丙戌九月

Example of a separate biographical data table:

<p>建彰公裔孫時日</p> <p>昌聚公 陽命生於大清乾隆壬午年閏五月廿四日辰時終於乾隆乙卯年八月廿八日辰時 公早壽世</p>	<p>祀別通</p>	<p>公墓在老名蛇尾山岡作金盤聚寶珠壁郊向酉墓甲庚</p> <p>至光緒十六年重修墓後向空辰向戌墓乾二下</p>	<p>道燦公 陽命生於大清乾隆庚戌年十月十九日卯時終於道光甲寅年十二月十八日酉時</p>	<p>土名安龍潭堤山作猛虎挑膽形坐巽向乾墓巳亥水</p> <p>出乾去坤水氣 至同治十二年八月廿七日安葬</p>	<p>道灼公 陽命生於大清乾隆癸丑年四月廿五日未時終於咸豐壬午年四月十五日酉時</p>	<p>祀陳氏 生於嘉慶己卯年十一月十一日辰時終於同治甲戌十三年四月十八日巳時</p>
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Terminology for pedigree charts and biographical data tables:

一世祖 (yī shì zǔ) – the first generation ancestor, more often referred to as 始祖 (shǐ zǔ)

二世祖 (èr shì zǔ) – second generation ancestors

三世祖 (sān shì zǔ) – third generation ancestors

四世祖 (sì shì zǔ) – fourth generation ancestors

代 (dài) – another term for generation, eg., 一代祖, 二代祖, etc.

公 (gōng) – following a name, a respectful term of address for an elderly man, e.g., 張公 – the revered Mr. Zhang

翁 (wēng) - following a name, a respectful term of address for an elderly man or father, e.g., 周公 – the revered Mr. Zhou

妣 (bǐ) – a formal term for one's deceased mother, used to designate a spouse

配 (pèi) – joined in marriage, used to designate a spouse

氏 (shì) – when following a spouse's surname, a term equivalent to the French word “nee”, meaning “surname at birth”.

生 (shēng) -- birth

終 (zhōng) – end, the end of life

卒 (zú) – to die

歿 (mò) – to die

生於 (shēng yú) – born on (date)

終於 (zhōng yú) – died on (date)

墓 (mù) – a grave

墓於 (mù yú) – buried on (date) or buried at (place)

墓在 (mù zài) – buried at

葬 (zàng) – to bury, inter

生 (shēng) – begat, when followed by 子 (zǐ) – son, or multiple sons, e.g., 二子 – two sons, 三子 – three sons, etc.

長子 (zhǎng zǐ) – the eldest son

次子 (cì zǐ) – the second son

三子 (sān zǐ) – the third son

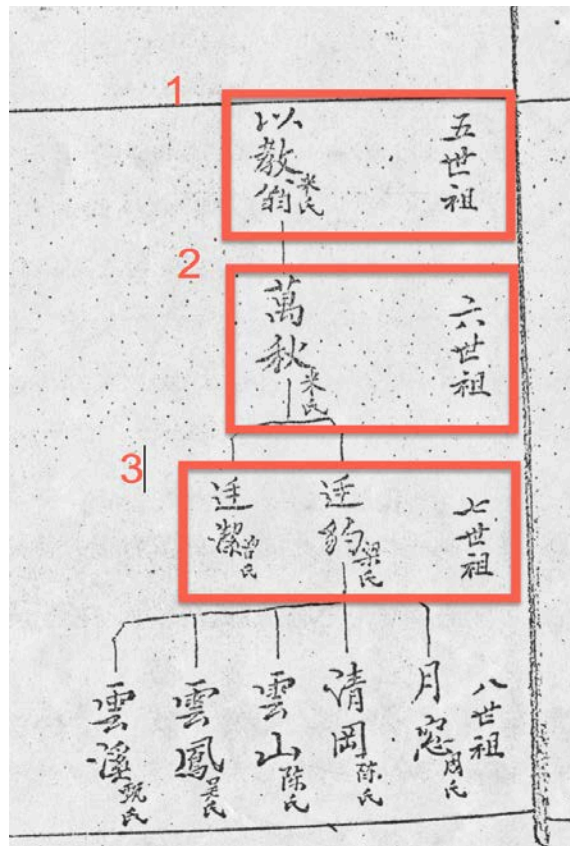
四子 (sì zǐ) – the fourth son

Chinese numerals:

Pedigree charts and genealogical tables often use Chinese numerals to number generations and sons. Chinese numerals are also used in dates. While common Chinese numbers are most often used, occasionally shorthand forms may be used. Another system of more complex characters, known as financial or “anti-fraud” numerals, can also be found in use in genealogical records. The table below represents various Chinese numerals that one may encounter:

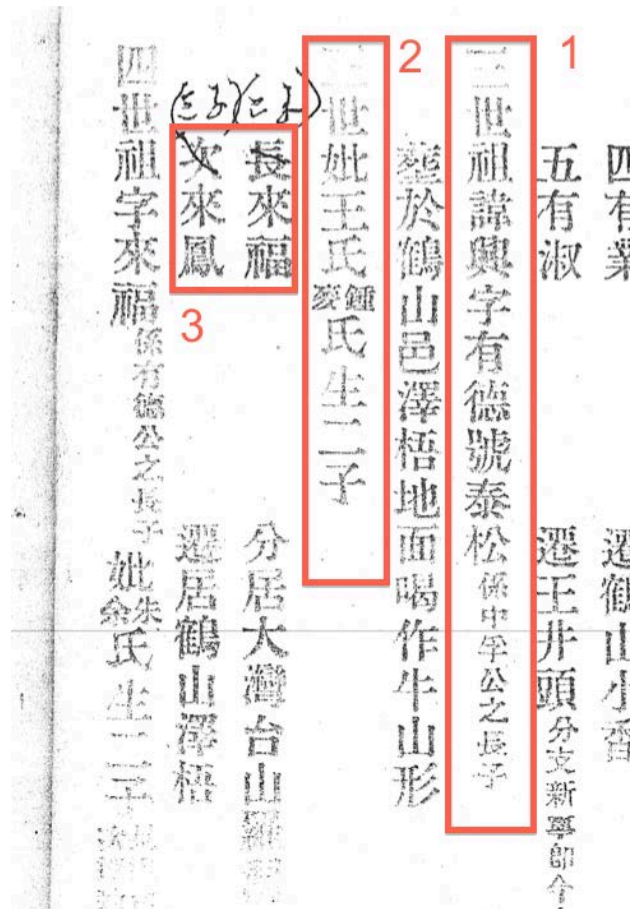
Normal or Other	Financial	Pinyin	Value
一 or 正	壹	yī	one
二 or 貳	貳	èr	two
三 or 弍	參	sān	three
四	肆	sì	four
五	伍	wǔ	five
六	陸	liù	six
七	柒	qī	seven
八	捌	bā	eight
九	玖	jiǔ	nine
十	拾	shí	ten
十一	拾壹	shí yī	eleven
十二	拾貳	shí èr	twelve
十三	拾參	shí sān	thirteen
二十 or 廿	貳拾	èr shí or niàn	twenty
二十一 or 廿一	貳拾壹	èr shí yī or niàn yī	twenty-one
二十二 or 廿二	貳拾貳	èr shí èr or niàn èr	twenty-two
三十 or 卅	參拾	sān shí or sà	thirty
百	佰	bǎi	hundred
千	仟	qiān	thousand

Example of reading a pagoda style pedigree chart:



1. 五世祖 – Fifth generation ancestor
 以教 – Yijiao (ancestor's name) 翁 – respectful term
 米氏 – Mi, surname at birth (spouse of Yijiao)
2. 六世祖 – Sixth generation ancestor
 萬秋 – Wanqiu (ancestor's name)
 米氏 – Mi, surname at birth (spouse of Wanqiu)
3. 七世祖 – Seventh generation ancestors
 廷豹 – Tingbao (ancestor's name, elder brother)
 梁氏 – Liang, surname at birth (spouse of Tingbao)
 廷潔 – Tingjie (ancestor's name, younger brother)
 曾氏 – Zeng, surname at birth (spouse of Tingjie)

Example of reading a modified imperial style pedigree chart:



1. 三世祖 – Third generation ancestor
 諱 (taboo name) – 興 Xing (ancestor's name)
 字 (style name) – 有德 Youde
 號 (literary name) – 泰松 Taisong
 係 (xì) – relationship: 中孚公之長子 – oldest son of revered Mr. Zhongfu
2. 三世妣 – Third generation spouses
 王氏 - Wang, surname at birth (spouse of Youde)
 麥氏 - Mai, surname at birth (spouse of Youde)
 鍾氏 - Zhong, surname at birth (spouse of Youde)
 生二子 – Begat two sons
3. 長 – Eldest (son) 來福 - Laifu
 次 – Second (son) 來鳳 – Laifeng

Additional terminology for pedigree charts and biographical data tables regarding no dependents or no further information:

1. Indicators that a person had no descendants:

止 (zhǐ) -- to stop (descendancy stopped)

無傳 (wúchuán) – had no descendants

出家 (chūjiā) – those who became monks and would have, in theory, left behind no progeny.

幼殤 (yòushāng) – died in youth

早世 (zǎoshì) – early death, departed this life early

夭 (yāo) – to die young, to die prematurely

早亡 (zǎowáng) – early death, departed early, premature death

2. The following terms, in essence, all indicate that there is “no information available.” This may refer to lack of death and burial records or that a person may have progeny but it’s not traceable.

未詳 (wèixiáng) -- no more detail (about this individual)

失考 (shīkǎo) -- record lost (records concerning this individual were lost)

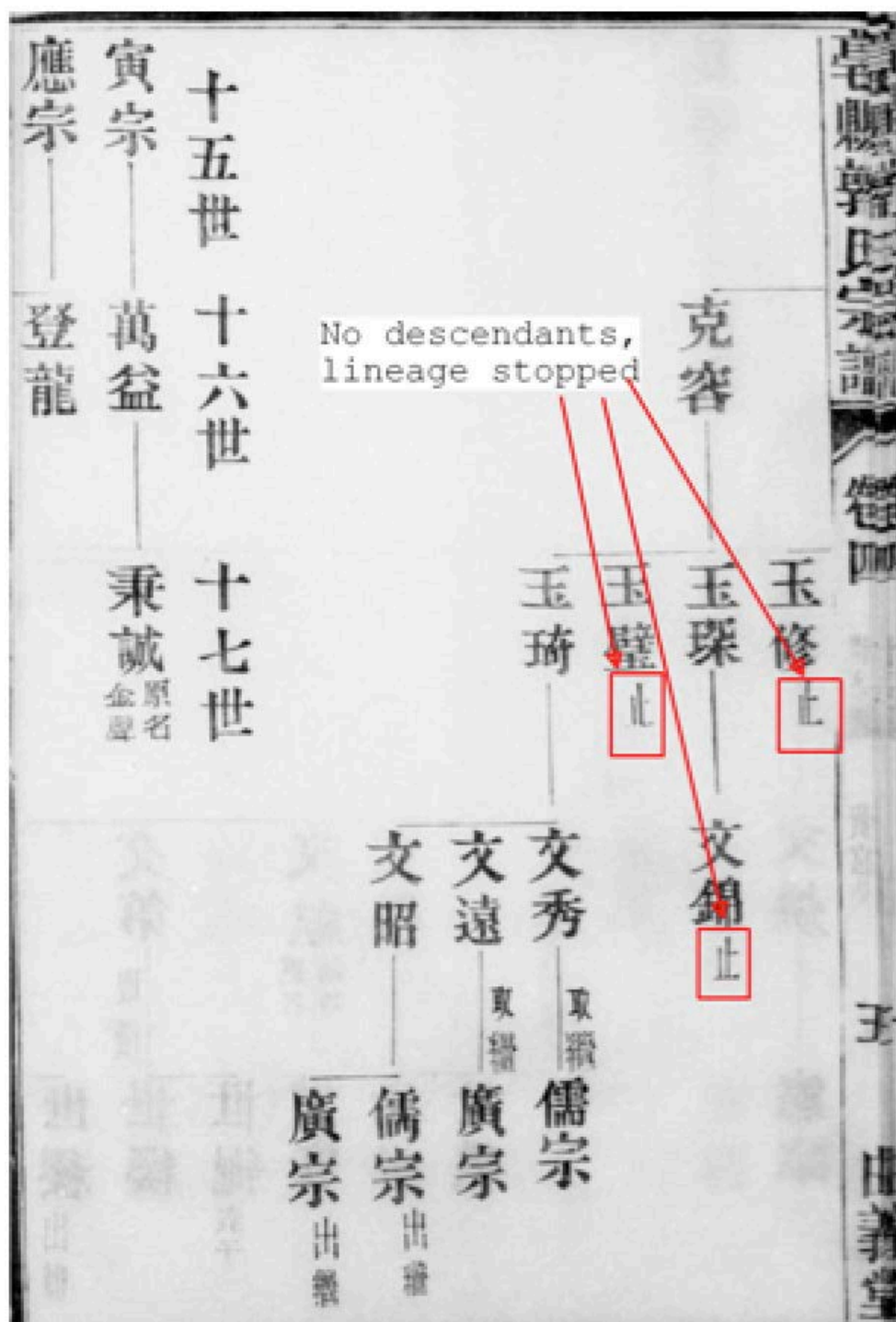
缺 (quē) -- deficient, lacking (insufficient information)

脱 (tuō) -- missing (information or records)

無考 (wúkǎo) -- without records

The above terms typically follow an individual’s given name on a pedigree or in the dialogue of a biographical data table. In many cases, however, there is no indicator and no lineage follows.

Example of no descendants:



Example of no further information on deaths and/or burial:

賢哉 長子 配 黎氏

賢味 長子 配 黎氏

嗣爵 黎氏

No detail

私派國衛 號豐城 清例授奉正大夫 清光緒二
年丙子四月十六日未時生 年四十一歲 民國五
年丙辰十月十四日申時歿 葬未詳

睿清公女 清光緒元年乙亥十月二十五日寅時生
歿葬未詳

子四 序居 序威 序儀 序欽 壽

入繼嗣諱長子序倫

女四 長適李介存 次適李竹初 三適劉龍泉

四適張

私派國諱 號祖堯 清光緒二十二年丙申十二月
初一日辰時生 歿葬未詳

優明公女 清光緒二十年甲午六月二十四日酉時
生 歿葬未詳

子一 序聞

卷十五 版貝房光侯公世系 九二

Reading Chinese Calendar Dates

Before the start of the Republic of China era in 1911, dates in Chinese genealogies were expressed using the traditional Chinese calendar system. The official name of the Chinese calendar is 農曆 (nóng lì) – the rural calendar. The calendar uses the Chinese sexagenary cycle (六十花甲 – liù shí huā jiǎ), also known as the Stems-and-Branches (干支 – gān zhī), a cycle of sixty terms used for recording years. The sixty different terms consist of two characters, the first representing a term from a cycle of ten known as the Heavenly Stems (天干 – tiān gān) and the second from a cycle of twelve known as the Earthly Branches (地支 – dì zhī). The Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches are listed in the table below:

Heavenly Stems	Pinyin	Earthly Branches	Pinyin
甲	jiǎ	子	zǐ
乙	yǐ	丑	chǒu
丙	bǐng	寅	yín
丁	dīng	卯	mǎo
戊	wù	辰	chén
己	jǐ	巳	sì
庚	gēng	午	wǔ
辛	xīn	未	wèi
壬	rén	申	shēn
癸	guǐ	酉	yǒu
		戌	xū
		亥	hài

The chart below, entitled “The 60 Year Cyclical Calendar” represents thirteen cycles of the Chinese calendar, for the period 1204-1983. The sixty terms consisting of the two-character stem-branch combinations are listed on the left and the corresponding years, thirteen years for each term are listed to the right.

Because the terms of the Chinese calendar repeat every sixty years, the particular years are distinguished usually by the 帝號 (dì hào) – the imperial title of the reigning emperor, or the 年號 (nián hào) – the reign title, a designation for the years the emperor was on the throne. The “Nien-Hao Era Date Chart” included below list the imperial titles and and reign years for the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Occasionally, the name of the dynasty is included to distinguish the year. A chart listing the Chinese dynasties is also provided below.

Chinese birth and death dates sometimes include the hour. A chart listing the Chinese terms for hour is also provided below.

THE 60 YEAR CYCLICAL CALENDAR

* * * *

CHINESE

YEARS IN THE CYCLE, A.D.

1.	甲子	jiǎ zǐ	1204	1264	1324	1384	1444	1504	1564	1624	1684	1744	1804	1864	1924
2.	乙丑	yǐ chǒu	1205	1265	1325	1385	1445	1505	1565	1625	1685	1745	1805	1865	1925
3.	丙寅	bǐng yín	1206	1266	1326	1386	1446	1506	1566	1626	1686	1746	1806	1866	1926
4.	丁卯	dīng mǎo	1207	1267	1327	1387	1447	1507	1567	1627	1687	1747	1807	1867	1927
5.	戊辰	wù chén	1208	1268	1328	1388	1448	1508	1568	1628	1688	1748	1808	1868	1928
6.	己巳	jǐ sì	1209	1269	1329	1389	1449	1509	1569	1629	1689	1749	1809	1869	1929
7.	庚午	gēng wǔ	1210	1270	1330	1390	1450	1510	1570	1630	1690	1750	1810	1870	1930
8.	辛未	xīn wèi	1211	1271	1331	1391	1451	1511	1571	1631	1691	1751	1811	1871	1931
9.	壬申	rén shēn	1212	1272	1332	1392	1452	1512	1572	1632	1692	1752	1812	1872	1932
10.	癸酉	guǐ yǒu	1213	1273	1333	1393	1453	1513	1573	1633	1693	1753	1813	1873	1933
11.	甲戌	jiǎ xū	1214	1274	1334	1394	1454	1514	1574	1634	1694	1754	1814	1874	1934
12.	乙亥	yǐ hài	1215	1275	1335	1395	1455	1515	1575	1635	1695	1755	1815	1875	1935
13.	丙子	bǐng zǐ	1216	1276	1336	1396	1456	1516	1576	1636	1696	1756	1816	1876	1936
14.	丁丑	dīng chǒu	1217	1277	1337	1397	1457	1517	1577	1637	1697	1757	1817	1877	1937
15.	戊寅	wù yín	1218	1278	1338	1398	1458	1518	1578	1638	1698	1758	1818	1878	1938
16.	己卯	jǐ mǎo	1219	1279	1339	1399	1459	1519	1579	1639	1699	1759	1819	1879	1939
17.	庚辰	gēng chén	1220	1280	1340	1400	1460	1520	1580	1640	1700	1760	1820	1880	1940
18.	辛巳	xīn sì	1221	1281	1341	1401	1461	1521	1581	1641	1701	1761	1821	1881	1941
19.	壬午	rén wǔ	1222	1282	1342	1402	1462	1522	1582	1642	1702	1762	1822	1882	1942
20.	癸未	guǐ wèi	1223	1283	1343	1403	1463	1523	1583	1643	1703	1763	1823	1883	1943
21.	甲申	jiǎ shēn	1224	1284	1344	1404	1464	1524	1584	1644	1704	1764	1824	1884	1944
22.	乙酉	yǐ yǒu	1225	1285	1345	1405	1465	1525	1585	1645	1705	1765	1825	1885	1945
23.	丙戌	bǐng xū	1226	1286	1346	1406	1466	1526	1586	1646	1706	1766	1826	1886	1946
24.	丁亥	dīng hài	1227	1287	1347	1407	1467	1527	1587	1647	1707	1767	1827	1887	1947
25.	戊子	wù zǐ	1228	1288	1348	1408	1468	1528	1588	1648	1708	1768	1828	1888	1948
26.	己丑	jǐ chǒu	1229	1289	1349	1409	1469	1529	1589	1649	1709	1769	1829	1889	1949
27.	庚寅	gēng yín	1230	1290	1350	1410	1470	1530	1590	1650	1710	1770	1830	1890	1950
28.	辛卯	xīn mǎo	1231	1291	1351	1411	1471	1531	1591	1651	1711	1771	1831	1891	1951
29.	壬辰	rén chén	1232	1292	1352	1412	1472	1532	1592	1652	1712	1772	1832	1892	1952
30.	癸巳	guǐ sì	1233	1293	1353	1413	1473	1533	1593	1653	1713	1773	1833	1893	1953
31.	甲午	jiǎ wǔ	1234	1294	1354	1414	1474	1534	1594	1654	1714	1774	1834	1894	1954
32.	乙未	yǐ wèi	1235	1295	1355	1415	1475	1535	1595	1655	1715	1775	1835	1895	1955
33.	丙申	bǐng shēn	1236	1296	1356	1416	1476	1536	1596	1656	1716	1776	1836	1896	1956
34.	丁酉	dīng yǒu	1237	1297	1357	1417	1477	1537	1597	1657	1717	1777	1837	1897	1957
35.	戊戌	wù xū	1238	1298	1358	1418	1478	1538	1598	1658	1718	1778	1838	1898	1958
36.	己亥	jǐ hài	1239	1299	1359	1419	1479	1539	1599	1659	1719	1779	1839	1899	1959
37.	庚子	gēng zǐ	1240	1300	1360	1420	1480	1540	1600	1660	1720	1780	1840	1900	1960
38.	辛丑	xīn chǒu	1241	1301	1361	1421	1481	1541	1601	1661	1721	1781	1841	1901	1961
39.	壬寅	rén yín	1242	1302	1362	1422	1482	1542	1602	1662	1722	1782	1842	1902	1962
40.	癸卯	guǐ mǎo	1243	1303	1363	1423	1483	1543	1603	1663	1723	1783	1843	1903	1963
41.	甲辰	jiǎ chén	1244	1304	1364	1424	1484	1544	1604	1664	1724	1784	1844	1904	1964
42.	乙巳	yǐ sì	1245	1305	1365	1425	1485	1545	1605	1665	1725	1785	1845	1905	1965
43.	丙午	bǐng wǔ	1246	1306	1366	1426	1486	1546	1606	1666	1726	1786	1846	1906	1966
44.	丁未	dīng wèi	1247	1307	1367	1427	1487	1547	1607	1667	1727	1787	1847	1907	1967
45.	戊申	wù shēn	1248	1308	1368	1428	1488	1548	1608	1668	1728	1788	1848	1908	1968
46.	己酉	jǐ yǒu	1249	1309	1369	1429	1489	1549	1609	1669	1729	1789	1849	1909	1969
47.	庚戌	gēng xū	1250	1310	1370	1430	1490	1550	1610	1670	1730	1790	1850	1910	1970
48.	辛亥	xīn hài	1251	1311	1371	1431	1491	1551	1611	1671	1731	1791	1851	1911	1971
49.	壬子	rén zǐ	1252	1312	1372	1432	1492	1552	1612	1672	1732	1792	1852	1912	1972
50.	癸丑	guǐ chǒu	1253	1313	1373	1433	1493	1553	1613	1673	1733	1793	1853	1913	1973
51.	甲寅	jiǎ yín	1254	1314	1374	1434	1494	1554	1614	1674	1734	1794	1854	1914	1974
52.	乙卯	yǐ mǎo	1255	1315	1375	1435	1495	1555	1615	1675	1735	1795	1855	1915	1975
53.	丙辰	bǐng chén	1256	1316	1376	1436	1496	1556	1616	1676	1736	1796	1856	1916	1976
54.	丁巳	dīng sì	1257	1317	1377	1437	1497	1557	1617	1677	1737	1797	1857	1917	1977
55.	戊午	wù wǔ	1258	1318	1378	1438	1498	1558	1618	1678	1738	1798	1858	1918	1978
56.	己未	jǐ wèi	1259	1319	1379	1439	1499	1559	1619	1679	1739	1799	1859	1919	1979
57.	庚申	gēng shēn	1260	1320	1380	1440	1500	1560	1620	1680	1740	1800	1860	1920	1980
58.	辛酉	xīn yǒu	1261	1321	1381	1441	1501	1561	1621	1681	1741	1801	1861	1921	1981
59.	壬戌	rén xū	1262	1322	1382	1442	1502	1562	1622	1682	1742	1802	1862	1922	1982
60.	癸亥	guǐ hài	1263	1323	1383	1443	1503	1563	1623	1683	1743	1803	1863	1923	1983

NIAN-HAO ERA DATE CHART

國號	帝號	年號, 第一年	在位年數	西曆年份
Dynasty or Kingdon	Emperor or Empress	The First Yea of Reign	Approx. Years of Reign	Western Year (A.D.)
明 Ming	太祖 Tàì Zǔ	洪武 Hóng Wǔ	31	1368
	惠帝 Huì Dì	建文 Jiàn Wén	4	1399
	成祖 Chéng Zǔ	永樂 Yǒng Lè	22	1403
	仁宗 Rén Zōng	洪熙 Hóng Xī	1	1425
	宣宗 Xuān Zōng	宣德 Xuān Dé	10	1426
	英宗 Yīng Zōng	正統 Zhèng Tǒng	14	1436
	代宗 Dài Zōng	景泰 Jǐng Tàì	7	1450
	英宗 Yīng Zōng	天順 Tiān Shùn	8	1457
	憲宗 Xiàn Zōng	成化 Chéng Huà	23	1465
	孝宗 Xiào Zōng	弘治 Hóng Zhì	18	1488
	武宗 Wǔ Zōng	正德 Zhèng Dé	16	1506
	世宗 Shǐ Zōng	嘉靖 Jiā Jìng	45	1522
	穆宗 Mù Zōng	隆慶 Lóng Qìng	6	1567
	神宗 Shén Zōng	萬曆 Wàn Lì	47	1573
	光宗 Guāng Zōng	泰昌 Tàì Chāng	1	1620
	熹宗 Xī Zōng	天啟 Tiān Qǐ	7	1621
	思宗 Sī Zōng	崇禎 Chóng Zhēn	16	1628
清 Qīng	世祖 Shì Zǔ	順治 Shùn Zhì	18	1644
	聖祖 Shèng Zǔ	康熙 Kāng Xī	61	1662
	世宗 Shì Zōng	雍正 Yōng Zhèng	13	1723
	高宗 Gāo Zōng	乾隆 Qián Lóng	60	1736
	仁宗 Rén Zōng	嘉慶 Jiā Qìng	25	1796
	文宗 Wén Zōng	道光 Dào Guāng	30	1821
	宣宗 Xuān Zōng	咸豐 Xián Fēng	11	1851
	穆宗 Mù Zōng	同治 Tóng Zhì	13	1862
	德宗 Dé Zōng	光緒 Guāng Xù	34	1875
	愛新覺羅 Ài Xīn Jué Luó	宣統 Xuān Tǒng	3	1909
中華民國 Republic of China				1912

Chinese Dynasties

ca. 2100-1600 BC	夏 (Xia) Dynasty
ca. 1600-1050 BC	商 (Shang) Dynasty
ca. 1046-256 BC	周 (Zhou) Dynasty
	西周 (Western Zhou) ca. 1046-771 BC
	東周 (Eastern Zhou) ca. 771-256 BC
	春秋時代 (Spring and Autumn Period) 770-ca. 475 BC
	戰國時代 (Warring States Period) ca. 475-221 BC
206 BC-220 AD	漢 (Han) Dynasty
	西漢 (Western/Former Han) 206 BC-9 AD
	東漢 (Eastern/Later Han) 25-220 AD
220-589 AD	六代時期 (Six Dynasties) Period
	三國 (Three Kingdoms) 220-265 AD
	晉 (Jin Dynasty) 265-420 AD
	南北朝 (Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties) 386-589 AD
581-618 AD	隋 (Sui) Dynasty
618-906 AD	唐 (Tang) Dynasty
907-960 AD	五代時期 (Five Dynasties) Period
960-1279	宋 (Song) Dynasty
	北宋 (Northern Song) 960-1127
	南宋 (Southern Song) 1127-1279
1279-1368	元 (Yuan) Dynasty
1368-1644	明 (Ming) Dynasty
1644-1912	清 (Qing) Dynasty
1912-1949	中華民國 Republic Period
1949-present	中華人民共和國 People's Republic of China

Chinese Hours

In ancient times, in order to tell the time, the Chinese 24-hour day was divided into twelve equal 2-hour periods called 時 (shí). Each double hour was given the name of one of the 12 earthly branches.

Earthly Branches	Pinyin	Hours
子	zǐ	11:00 PM - 1:00 AM
丑	chǒu	1:00 – 3:00
寅	yín	3:00 – 5:00
卯	mǎo	5:00 – 7:00
辰	chén	7:00 – 9:00
巳	sì	9:00 – 11:00
午	wǔ	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
未	wèi	1:00 – 3:00
申	shēn	3:00 – 5:00
酉	yǒu	5:00 – 7:00
戌	xū	7:00 – 9:00
亥	hài	9:00 – 11:00

Other terminology for Chinese calendar dates:

年 (nián) - year

月 (yuè) - month

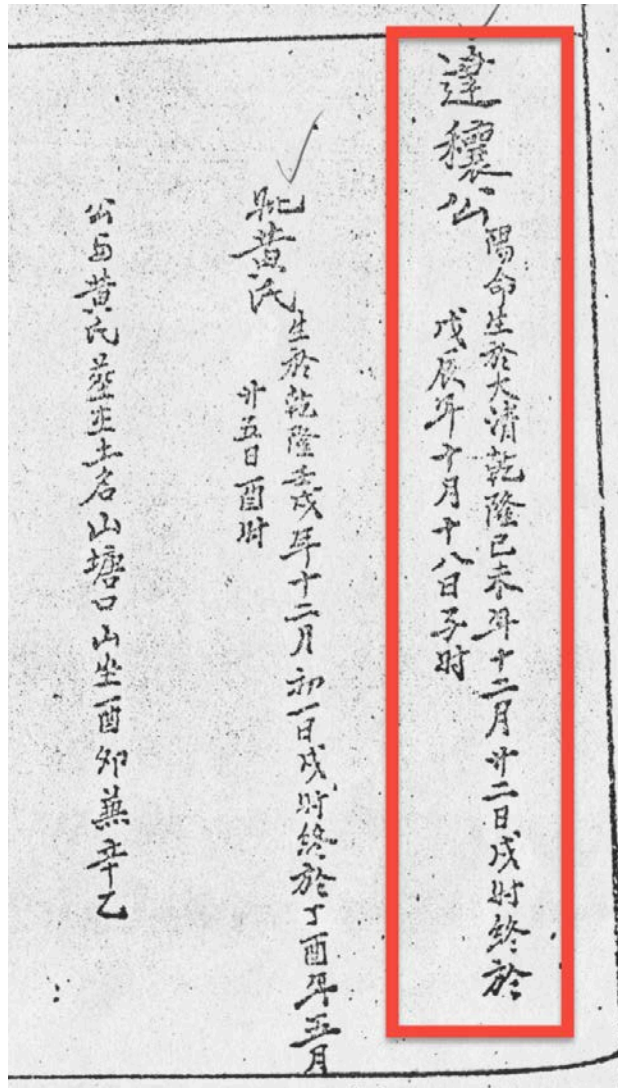
閏 (rùn yuè) – an intercalary (leap) month in the Chinese calendar

日(rì) - day

初 (chū) – in the early part of...used before the earlier days of the month

時 (shí) – hour

Examples of reading a Chinese calendar dates:



達穰公陽命生於大清乾隆己未年十二月廿二日戌時，

Name: 達穰 (Dáráng) 公 (gōng) – the revered Darang

Introductory phrase: 陽命 (yáng mìng) refers to lifespan

Event: 生於 (shēng yú) – born on...

Dynasty: 大清 (dà qīng) – The great Qing Dynasty

Reign title: 乾隆 (qián lóng)

Year: 己未 (jǐ wèi) - 1740 (This year mostly corresponds with 1739, but this date falls at the end of 己未 and extends into early 1740.)

Month: 十二月 (shí èr yuè) – twelfth month

Day: 廿二日 (niàn èr rì) – the twenty second day (廿 = 20)

Hour: 戌時 (xū shí) – 7:00-9:00 PM

終於戊辰年十月十八日子時

Event: 終於 (zhōng yú) – died on...

Year: 戊辰 (wù chén) – 1808 (Determining this year took some extrapolation because the imperial title or reign title is not mentioned. If the death occurred during the reign title of 乾隆 (qián lóng), this person would have died in 1748, at the age of 8, which is not logical for a person who was married and begat two children. The year 1808, during the reign title of 嘉慶 (jiā qìng) for the year of death makes much more logical sense. The next possibility would be the year 1868, which would mean the person lived until the unlikely age of 128.)

Month: 十月 (shí yuè) – tenth month

Day: 十八日 (shí bā rì) – the eighteenth day

Hour: 子時 (zǐ shí) – 11:00 PM - 1:00 AM

The revered Mr. Dáráng's dates of birth and death converted to the Western calendar are as follows:

Born: 20 January (not 22 December) 1740

Died: 5 December (not 18 October) 1808

Please note the months and the days of the Chinese calendar differ from that of the Western calendar. The months of the Chinese calendar are lunar months, beginning on the new moon and ending the day before the next new moon. The number of charts needed to convert the Chinese months and days to Western months and days corresponding to the number of years represented in "The 60 Year Cyclical Calendar" chart would fill many of volumes of books. The Academia Sinica in Taiwan has posted on the Internet an automated Chinese-to-Western calendar converter tool that covers 2,000 years: <http://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw>. The dates above were converted using this tool.